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MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS BULLETIN

VOL. I.

BOSTON, MARCH, 1903

No. 1

Museum Bulletin.

This Bulletin is issued by the Museum of Fine Arts as an experiment. Should it prove acceptable it will be published at intervals hereafter until further notice, its purpose being to keep our Annual Subscribers and others who are interested informed of what is being done in the Museum; to call their attention to new acquisitions; and to show them, in brief and convenient form, where objects recently purchased may be found. In its news of the Museum it is not intended to supersede the daily or weekly papers, which will be supplied as heretofore with items of interest to the general public, but to serve as a guide to those who are already familiar with the collections, and who wish to have their attention directed from time to time to changes in the arrangement of objects and additions to them.

The Bulletin will be sent free to all Annual Subscribers of the Museum and holders of Life Tickets, and will be given to visitors to the Museum. The Director of the Museum will be glad to learn whether it meets the approval of those who receive this number, and will welcome any suggestions regarding the character of the publication which will tend to make it more useful.

The twenty-seventh Annual Report of the Museum is now in the press and will appear in the course of the month.

Special Exhibitions.

PRINT DEPARTMENT.

An exhibition is arranged in the three Print Rooms illustrating the history of Dutch and Flemish etching from early times until the last years of the nineteenth century. There will be found a list of the artists represented and a note of the arrangement of their works exhibited at the entrance to the first Print Room.

Preparations are being made for an exhibition of English mezzotints and portraits of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries which will illustrate the best work done by that process in England.

JAPANESE DEPARTMENT.

During the present month an exhibition of architectural and decorative wood-carving from Japan will be opened in the Japanese Corridor, and will prove, we presume, the first of its kind presented by any Occidental museum. The objects which comprise it have been recently acquired by the Museum and the various lenders from among the earliest exportations of such forms

of Japanese art. The Buddhist temples and the palaces of Japanese feudal families loaded with elaborate ornamental carving, and often nowadays in a state of great decay, are being drawn upon for these objects, and the treasure so accumulated is finding its way largely to the collectors of this country, and in some measure to those of Europe. The various fragments have come from all classes of buildings,—temples, palaces, teahouses, and shrines,—and date from all periods from the thirteenth to the nineteenth century.

Nearly every one of these fragments, it must be borne in mind, has an architectural function which may be determined by those interested, from an inspection of the miniature temple shrine in the centre of the Lacquer Room. There may be seen the reduced counterpart of the two great slabs of diaper carving which hang near either end of the corridor, and whose office will be found to be that of the ornamentation we place over our doors. The several sculptured lions of the exhibition will be discovered like capitals over the columns of the shrine; the pairs of wing-shaped perforated carving support the ascending rafters of the overhanging gables; the reversed pyramids will be seen pendent below the peaks of the gable; the truncated upright triangular forms will be found above the ends of the ridge pole; the rectangular panels, in many parts of the outer and inner walls, in balustrades and basements.

In the Corridor it will be observed that the members are taken both from the interior and exterior of various edifices, those from outdoors being commonly weathered to a beautiful gray, and showing in their scale and their deep incisions the function of exterior ornament; those from the interior, on the contrary, often still completely colored or gilded, though decayed, showing equally well their fitness for closer examination and diffused light.

DEPARTMENT OF PAINTINGS.

MESDAG EXHIBITION.

A special exhibition of pictures by Hendrik William Mesdag, the Dutch marine painter, will be arranged in the Fifth Gallery, to open about March 20 and continue for three weeks. The number of works shown will amount to twenty-seven.

TEXTILE DEPARTMENT.

Some change in the exhibition in the Textile Room on the second floor is now being planned. A selection of laces will be arranged in the hall, and in the main gallery arrangement will be made to show a number of brocades. Many of the objects to be shown have been acquired lately, by gift from Denman W. Ross and by loan from Theodore M. Davis.